DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 401 663 EC 305 122

AUTHOR	Rogers, Byron, Ed.; Ensign, Arselia, Ed.
TITLE	Your Child on the Bus: Transporting Students with Special Needs.
INSTITUTION	PAM Assistance Centre, Lansing, MI.
SPONS AGENCY	Michigan State Board of Education, Lansing.
PUB DATE	Sep 96
NOTE	13p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Physically Impaired Association of Michigan, PAM Assistance Centre, 1023 S US 27, St. Johns, MI 48879-2424; toll-free telephone: 800-274-7426 ($2).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT	PAM Repeater; n101 Sep 1996
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Bus Drivers; *Bus Transportation; Elementary Secondary Education; Parent Role; Parent School Relationship; *Physical Disabilities; *Physical Mobility; *Student Transportation; Transportation
IDENTIFIERS	Michigan

ABSTRACT

This guide for Michigan parents of children with physical disabilities provides a synopsis of information and suggestions on school bus transportation gained from a series of four workshops. Topics covered include: (1) planning (determining just what the student's special transportation needs are by the Individualized Educational Planning Committee); (2) communication (such as always communicating to transportation personnel any necessary changes such as an alternate drop site); (3) safety of equipment (for example, keeping all special equipment such as wheelchairs in top condition); (4) clothing (for example, dressing the child appropriately for the circumstances); (5) loading and unloading; (6) preparing for the ride (for example, ensuring that the child is emotionally and physically prepared); and (7) problem solving (such as dealing directly and thoughtfully with the persons most involved). (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

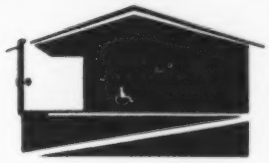
ED 401 663

PAM REPEATER

YOUR CHILD
ON THE BUS

No . 101

September, 1996



PUBLISHER

PAM Assistance Centre
Physically Impaired Association
of Michigan
1023 S US 27
St. Johns, MI 48879-2424
(800) 274-7426
Voice or TTY

Arselia Ensign, Editor

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Transporting Students with Special Needs

SCHOOL IS "WHERE IT'S AT", *but getting there may be another story. Michigan can be rightly proud of dedicated and caring school bus drivers. aides, and school personnel whose first and last assignment each day is to make sure that every child enjoys the privilege of attending school.*

"Getting there" may not always be so simple. Many of our special kids need accommodations in order for them to ride a school bus. Planning for and providing those special considerations can be a real challenge, especially for students whose disabilities are severe and sometime very complex. Whether an aide, oxygen, wheelchair, ventilator or other special equipment or provisions are needed takes careful planning and preparation.

Parents helping their children prepare for the bus ride to school may not always be comfortable facing those morning goodbyes. We are hoping to raise that comfort level by offering some time-tested suggestions.

Byron Rogers, our Guest Editor for this REPEATER, has been busily interviewing some parents, their child's bus driver, and others, for tips to ensure that this transporting goes well.

Have a good school year!

Editor

EC305122

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
A. Ensign
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This publication has been made available to you through an IDEA State Initiated Grant for the PAM Assistance Centre awarded by the State Board of Education. (The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Michigan Board of Education, an no endorsement is inferred.) The document is in the public domain and may be copied for further distribution when proper credit is given. For further information or inquiries about this project contact the Michigan Department of Education, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Transporting Students with Special Needs - THE PARENT'S ROLE

Teamwork! That's the "bottom line" when it comes to parent and school bus transportation personnel working together to move special children and young adults to their school programs, and return them safely to their homes. It boils down to communication, efficiency and safety, all of which incorporate many, many details that need to be considered.

Parents, students, bus drivers, aides, teachers, special education staff and supervisors must be willing to cooperate to create an efficient and reliable system. Each person needs to be understanding, patient and flexible to make it work. Drivers need to be willing and able to expend the extra effort it sometimes takes to transport students with special needs, both physical and psychological. Parents and students should keep in mind that the driver has a schedule to keep and a specific route to follow. It requires all persons involved to create and maintain a viable system. These and other concerns are addressed in the following paragraphs.

Background

A series of four workshops on transporting special students was held during the spring and summer of 1996. These were cosponsored by the PAM Assistance Centre, an affiliate of the Physically Impaired Association of Michigan (PIAM), the Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT) and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE).

Experts from MAPT and MDE reviewed selected sections of the 1995 National Standards for School Transportation which dealt with special needs student transportation, specially equipped buses, infants, toddlers, preschool children and applicable laws and forms. Following the presentations the workshop participants, largely consisting of bus drivers and supervisors, were surveyed regarding their concerns in working with parents. Each was also asked to provide copies of any handbooks or written procedures on the topic. It was learned that very few of the districts represented have addressed the topic in writing, although there was no lack of information and expertise.

Additionally, transportation supervisors were interviewed who verified the workshop participant and presenter concerns and added their own perspectives. In every case, parent understanding and cooperation were deemed essential.

The writer also tagged along on a Dean Transportation run from Heartwood School in Mason, Michigan to talk with drivers, aides and parents to see some of the problems first hand. The writer also attended the MAPT sponsored training on Special Needs Transportation Law, held in Lansing, MI on May 13, 1996.

The following is a synopsis of the information accumulated from observation, interviews, workshop participant surveys, available manuals and other documents listed as resources.

THE PARENTS' ROLE

A review of the manuals for parents, or those with sections for parents, included a listing of responsibilities for transportation providers, parents and some noted those for students as well. Categories include planning and communication, providing safe equipment, proper clothing, assistance in loading and unloading, preparing the student psychologically and physically for the ride, and problem solving.

Planning

When it is determined by the Individualized Educational Planning Committee (IEPC) that the disability precludes the pupil from riding a regular school bus, then the IEPC must determine what accommodations are needed. The first decision is to determine whether the pupil can ride a regular school bus with some modification such as wheelchair tie-downs and lift or a two-way radio. If accommodations on a regular bus are determined to be insufficient, then specialized transportation must be considered. This is a special vehicle used only to transport special education students.

When a district anticipates the need for specialized transportation, special education personnel should provide pertinent information to the transportation director or representative prior to the IEPC. This should include the needs to be accommodated, as required in the Transportation Rules (R388.384). A representative of the transportation department should be invited to attend the IEPC. Here is where the parents, special education and transportation personnel begin their joint planning and establish ongoing communication.

Communication

This is one of the most important aspects of establishing the team and creating a coordinated, safe and efficient transportation system. Parents need to let the transportation personnel know if there needs to be a variance of the schedule or provisions to transport their child. Advance notice, as much as possible, needs to be given to allow schedule changes or route changes.

It is very important to establish an alternate pick up or drop site, preferably along the regular bus route. This is very critical since there may be times when the parent or responsible adult may not be at home, especially in cases of early closing of school for bad weather, parent conferences or other reasons. Any variance of the regular schedule can soon create a real headache for transportation personnel and many others. Although remote, along with this is the possibility of a bus breakdown, which can be a "code blue" for drivers. It cannot be stressed too strongly that alternative plans need to be in place in anticipation of an emergency or change in the regular run. Consequently, be sure to notify the bus people if your child is not to be picked up, not to be dropped off or if an alternate site is needed.

Safe Equipment

If your child needs any kind of equipment, such as a wheelchair, oxygen, crutches, respirator, etc. it needs to be in top condition. One issue that kept coming up in the interviews and surveys was the need for wheelchair brakes to work well. With inflatable tires, proper air pressure

is needed to allow the brakes to work properly. Footrests should be in place, belts or other restraints in place and adjusted, trays secured, and batteries charged if applicable. Oxygen tanks should be full, suction and all other special equipment ready. Remember that each piece of equipment has to be properly secured.

Clothing

Each child needs to be dressed for the occasion be it a hot summer day or blustery cold day in January, inside the bus as well as outside. Temperatures inside a bus can reach a point where it could affect the health and comfort of the child. Be aware that in a lift equipped bus the temperature inside can change quickly when the lift is in use so children need to be clothed properly. It is the exception, rather than the rule, that buses are equipped with air conditioning, so proper dress is important in hot weather as well. Also try to avoid loose draw strings and scarves as they could get caught in doors, lifts or other places on the bus.

Loading and Unloading

This is the most vulnerable time for an accident to happen so it is important to pay particular attention for these few minutes each day. First of all a safe and level area is needed, especially for children who use a wheelchair. Drives should be clear of snow or other obstructions. Pets should not be present when loading or unloading and are definitely not welcomed on the bus except with prior approval in rare situations.

Do not send toys or unnecessary items as they may be lost or broken in transport. There could be exceptions, with prior approval, if necessary for the well being of your child.

Short good byes are welcomed by drivers and aides; long ones could delay the schedule. Do hugs and kisses before your child boards or after he or she leaves the bus.

Unless asked by the driver, do not attempt to assist in the loading or unloading. That is the driver's responsibility. Be ready to help, but only if asked by the driver. Note that operating the lift is definitely not something that anyone does except authorized bus personnel. Drivers appreciate your willingness, but only help when asked. Do not board the bus unless invited. It is important the driver not be distracted from his or her task at hand.

It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that the most important part of loading and unloading is to be there and be ready. Most drivers are authorized to wait only three minutes to pick up a rider. Maintaining the schedule ranks right after safety. Remember that there is another Mom or Dad just down the road who is waiting to have the bus pick up their child.

Preparing for the Ride

Getting your child ready is not limited to a full stomach, proper clothing, or the provision of assistive equipment in operating condition. As most of us parents know, if something happens to upset a child it may affect the whole day, so it is important that the day start out with your child in a good mood. Full stomachs always help; lots of love and support are paramount. Drivers and teachers request that you do not send your children if they are ill with nausea, high temperature or have a contagious or infectious disease. It is also recommended that you refrain from sending them if they are experiencing violent behavior, screaming, hyperventilation, or if they have pants in need of changing.

Remember to send any prescribed medicine, with a name label and instructions, and hand it in a safe container to the driver or aide. Food and drink are not usually appropriate on the bus, nor are potentially dangerous items such as lighters or skateboards. Illegal drugs or weapons will not be tolerated. It sounds kind of harsh to mention these things but all have been a problem at some time and some of them are cause for suspension and or prosecution. Do a final check before your child boards the bus while considering these items.

Some districts do not allow friends who are not scheduled for that run to ride, especially without prior approval. Check with the driver first before even suggesting that this may be possible.

Problem Solving

If you have a concern or a question don't hesitate to express it to the proper person first. Problems are usually solved best when solved at the lowest level. Start by talking to the driver and/or aide. If not satisfied try contacting your local director of special education. Allow a reasonable amount of time for them to address the problem before contacting higher authorities or an advocate. Sometimes there are political forces in effect that cannot be known from the parents' perspective. As an example, the transportation director may be trying to convince the supervisor or the school board that an air conditioned bus is needed, but the budget does not allow it at the time. Union issues, including seniority, need to be considered by bus supervisors when determining which driver is assigned to a particular run.

Transportation personnel normally have the parent's and the child's interest at heart but they also have to deal with other parents' needs, as well as the concerns of others involved.

If everyone involved has patience, understanding and empathy for others, it will lead to the best possible solution to the problems encountered in ensuring that students are transported safely and efficiently.

Summary

Parents play an important role in the development and operation of an efficient and safe school bus transportation system. By assuming responsibility for your child and working cooperatively with the other members of the team your child will have a positive experience when riding the school bus.

Pop Quiz for Parents

True or False?

1. Teamwork and cooperation are important.

2. Safety is the prime consideration of the bus driver.

3. Planning and ongoing communication are necessary.

4. Advance notice is required for any change in the schedule.

5. Equipment must be in top condition.

6. Interior bus temperatures are always kept constant.

7. It is the parent's responsibility to load the child on the bus.

8. It is important to do a "pre-boarding check" of your child, equipment and belongings.

9. Problems are best solved at the top level of authority.

10.The PAM Centre cosponsored a series of workshops for bus drivers and facilitated the publishing of these suggestions.

Answers: 1.True 2.True 3.True 4.True 5.True 6.False 7.False 8.True 9.False 10.True

Acknowledgements

Our thanks and appreciation to the persons whose names follow for providing assistance and consultation in developing these suggestions. Thanks also to the workshop participants and to the parents for their comments and suggestions.

Jan Baxter, Ph.D., Supervisor, Office of Special Education, MDE
Ms. Gwen Belen, Bus Driver, Dean Transportation, Lansing, MI
Mr. Kellie Dean, President, Dean Transportation, Lansing, MI
Ms. Betty Doolittle, Supervisor, Dean Transportation, Alma, MI
Ms. Nora Downing, Supervisor, Dean Transportation, Mt. Pleasant, MI
Mr. Mike Dykhouse, Director of Transportation, Grand Rapids Public Schools
Ms. Barbara Nielsen, Transportation Dept., Cedar Springs Public Schools
John R. Osborne, Ph.D., Supervisor Traffic Safety and Management Services, MDE
Mr. Bill Tousley, Transportation Supervisor, Charlotte Public Schools, Charlotte, MI
Ms. Jeanette Wesolowski, Transportation Mgr., Macomb ISD, Clinton Township, MI
Ms. Annie Zesiger, Director of Transportation and President of MAPT, Berrien County ISD

Resources

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION
Dean Transportation Inc.
6911 South Cedar Street
Lansing, MI 48911

TRANSPORTATION POLICY AND RULES
Grand Rapids Public Schools
900 Union N.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

STUDENT/PARENT TRANSPORTATION HANDBOOK
Berrien County ISD
Blossomland Learning Center
711 St Joseph Avenue
Berrien Springs, MI 49103

TRANSPORTATION RULES AND PROCEDURES
Cedar Springs Public Schools
Transportation Department
204 East Muskegon
Cedar Springs, MI 49319

INFORMATION ABOUT TRANSPORTING PUPILS WITH HANDICAPS
Office of Special Education
MI Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, MI 48909

1995 NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION
Missouri Safety Center
Humphreys Suite 210
Warrensburg, MO 64093

Children Assisted by Medical Technology in Educational Settings

GUIDELINES FOR CARE
Project School Care
The Children's Hospital
Boston, MA

STUDY OF TRANSPORTATION OF MEDICALLY FRAGILE CHILDREN
Office of Special Education Services
MI Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, MI 48090

PROTOCOL FOR TRANSPORTING THE MEDICALLY FRAGILE
Dean Transportation, Inc.
6911 S. Cedar Street
Lansing, MI 48911

Special thanks to Mr. Harry Grether, Executive Director, PIAM, and to Arselia Ensign, Ph.D., Director, PAM Assistance Centre, for their suggestions, guidance and support.

Guest Editor:
Byron Rogers, Ed.S.
Proprietor/Consultant
Special Education Services (DBA)
322 Lawton
Mason, MI 48854
(517) 676-8124

Is your PIAM subscription up-to-date?

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

PiAM

Mail to: PAM Assistance Centre/PIAM
1023 S US 27
St. Johns MI 48879-2424

Name _____

Organization, if any _____

City _____ **State** ____ **ZIP** _____

My interest is _____ **personal** _____ **family member** _____ **professional** _____

❒ Individual ($10) ❒ Organization ($25) ❒ Outside the country ($15)
❒ Corporate ($50) ❒ Gift or Memorial ($____)

(If designated for PAM, LLRC or Media Centre, please indicate)

PUBLICATIONS

PHYSICALLY IMPAIRED ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN
PAM ASSISTANCE CENTRE-1023 S US 27., ST. JOHNS, MI 48879-2424

Copies, **The PAM REPEATER (<u>$2.00</u>** each prepaid)

——#47--Wheels on Wheels, Mar.1988 (8 pp.)
——#48--Intergenerational Homes, Second Printing, Apr. 1994 (8 pp.)
——#50--Guidelines for Selection of Communication Devices, Nov. 1988 (8 pp.)
——#54--Sewing: Easier with Adaptations, Oct. 1989 (8 pp.)
——#55--Toys and Play for Special Kids, Nov. 1989 (12 pp.)
——#58--Home Accessibility 1, Feb. 1990 (8 pp.)
——#61--Gardening for All, May. 1990 (12 pp.)
——#66--Home Accessibility 2: Approaches and Entrances, Jan. 1991 (10 pp.)
——#70--Houses of Worship-Physical Accessibility, Jul. 1991 (8 pp.)
——#72--Low Tech Solutions-A Place to Begin, Jan. 1992 (8 pp.)
——#75--Low Tech and Quality Special Education, May 1992 (12 pp.)
——#76--Ease Your Living, #1, Sept. 1992 (8 pp.)
——#77--Parenting With a Disability, Jan. 1993 (12pp.)
——#79--Universal Playground Design, May 1993 (16 pp.)
——#80--Aquatics and Persons With Disabilities, Second Printing, Jan. 1994 (16 pp.)
——#81--A Mother's Choice — Toys for Children with Special Needs, Nov. 1993 (12 pp.)
——#82--Art is For Everyone, Feb. 1994 (14 pp.)
——#83--Environmental Controls, Mar. 1994 (12 pp.)
——#85--Ease Your Living #2, Apr. 1994 (12 pp.)
——#86--Pet Therapy, Jun. 1994 (8 pp.)
——#87--Inclusion-The Role of Technology, Second Printing, Jun. 1994 (16 pp.)
——#88--Creative Clothing Concepts, Nov. 1994 (12 pp.)
——#89--Easy Access Gifts, Dec. 1994 (4 pp.)
——#90--Better than Toys, Feb. 1995 (12 pp.)
——#92--Housing -Mobile and Accessible, Apr. 1995 (8 pp.)
——#93--Recreability Resources-RESNA, Sept. 1995 (4 pp.)
——#94--Assistive Tech. Resources-Part 1, University Based Services, Nov. 1995 (10 pp.)
——#95--Disabilities-Communication, Myths, Resources, Nov. 1995 (8 pp.)
——#96--Assistive Technology Resources, Part II, Metro. MI, Jan. 1996 (12 pp.)
——#97--Positive Inclusion Experiences, Jan. 1996 (16 pp.)
___#98--Camp-O-Rama, Mar. 1996 (12 pp.)
___#99--Your Child at Home, Apr. 1996 (4 pp.)
__#100--Signaling Devices, Jun. 1996 (12pp.)
__#101--Your Child on The Bus, Sept. 1996 (12pp.)

Copies, GRAM from PAM - ($1.00 each or 3/$2.00)

——No. 3- The World of the Little - Book Reviews, Feb. 1989 (4 pp.)
——No. 6- Survival Literature, May. 1990 (4 pp.)
——No.15-No Cost Toys, Recycling for Fun, Jan. 1992 (2 pp.)
——No.18-Sources and Resources, Mar. 1993 (6 pp.)

Copies, PIAM NEWS — ($1.00 each)
____ Friendship Force in Russia, Feb. 1996 (4 pp.)
____ Play Ball- No Shut Outs, Mar. 1996 (4 pp.)

Please send copies as checked. Enclosed you will find $ ————

Name:————————————————————

Street:————————————————————

City, State, Zip Code:————————————————————